

# Motorcycle Safety

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists are about 35 times as likely as passenger car occupants to die in a motor vehicle crash and eight times more likely to be injured. Safe motorcycling takes balance, coordination and good judgment.

## Tips for motorcyclists

- ▶ Wear protective gear at all times, including a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) compliant helmet. Look for the DOT symbol on the outside back of the helmet.
- ▶ Choose brightly colored clothing to make yourself more visible. If you wear dark clothing, wear a reflective vest.
- ▶ To be easily seen by other drivers, turn headlights on, even in daylight hours.
- ▶ When riding at night, wear only clear eye protection (not tinted), and keep it clean and free of scratches.
- ▶ Never ride while impaired by drugs or alcohol.
- ▶ Ride within your own skill limits.
- ▶ Obey all traffic laws and ride with the flow of traffic
- ▶ Leave plenty of room between your bike and other vehicles. Your stopping distance may be increased if you have a passenger or heavy bundle.
- ▶ Get trained and licensed. For information on Kentucky's Motorcycle Rider Education Course, call 1-800-396-3234 or visit [www.kytc.ky.gov/drlic/motorcycle/kmrep.htm](http://www.kytc.ky.gov/drlic/motorcycle/kmrep.htm)

## Kentucky's motorcycle helmet law

Kentucky first enacted a motorcycle helmet law for all riders in 1968. This law was amended in July 1998 to require helmet use only by:

- Motorcycle operators and passengers under the age of 21;
- Motorcycle operators who possess a motorcycle instruction permit;
- Motorcycle operators who have had an operator's license for less than one year.



## Helmet use facts and statistics

**FACT:** According to NHTSA, when the universal helmet law was repealed in Kentucky in 1998, motorcycle fatalities increased by over 50 percent.

**FACT:** In 2011, there were 1,370 motorcycle injuries and 72 fatalities in Kentucky. Of those injured, 737 were not wearing a helmet. Of those killed, 44 were not wearing a helmet.

**FACT:** NHTSA states helmets reduce motorcycle rider fatalities by 22 to 37 percent and brain injuries by 44 to 65 percent.

**FACT:** NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 1,829 motorcyclists in 2008. If all victims had worn helmets, an additional 823 lives could have been saved.

**FACT:** According to NHTSA's National Occupant Protection Use Survey, DOT-compliant helmet use increased from 48 percent in 2005 to 67 percent in 2009.

# Share the road with motorcycles

- ▶ Motorcycles are vehicles with the same rights and privileges as any vehicle on the roadway.
- ▶ Allow the motorcyclist a full lane width. The motorcycle needs the room to maneuver safely.
- ▶ Approximately half of all motorcycle crashes involve another motor vehicle. Nearly 40 percent were caused by the other vehicle turning left in front of the motorcyclist.
- ▶ Motorcycles are small and may be difficult to see. They have a smaller profile than many vehicles, which can make it more difficult to judge the speed and distance of an approaching motorcyclist.
- ▶ Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows the motorcyclist to anticipate traffic flow and find a safe lane position.
- ▶ Remember that motorcyclists are often hidden in a blind spot or missed in a quick look due to their smaller size. Always check mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic and at intersections.
- ▶ Don't be fooled by a flashing turn signal on a motorcycle—their turn signals usually are not self-cancelling. Wait to be sure the motorcycle is going to turn before you proceed.
- ▶ Road conditions that are minor annoyances to you pose major hazards to motorcyclists. Motorcyclists may change their speed or adjust their position within a lane suddenly in reaction to road and traffic conditions such as potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, and grooved pavement.
- ▶ Allow a greater following distance, three or four seconds, when following a motorcycle so the motorcyclist has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency. In dry conditions, motorcycles can stop more quickly than cars.



[www.msf-usa.org](http://www.msf-usa.org)

**Kentucky Motorcycle Rider Education Program**  
**Traffic Safety Institute**  
**Eastern Kentucky University**  
**521 Lancaster Avenue**  
**Richmond, KY 40475-3102**  
**1-800-396-3234**  
<http://drlic.kytc.ky.gov/motorcycle/kmrep.htm>

## For additional information:

- **Kentucky Governor's Commission on Motorcycle Safety and Education:** <http://kentuckymotorcycleeducationandsafety.ky.gov/>
- **Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Division of Driver Licensing:** <http://drlic.kytc.ky.gov/>
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:** [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)

Kentucky Transportation Cabinet  
Office of Highway Safety



<http://highwaysafety.ky.gov>  
502-564-1438 or 1-888-374-8768